



Their mission accomplished, U.S. air defenders celebrate the toppling of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein by unfurling the Stars & Stripes and ADA banner at Baghdad International Airport.

IRAQI FREEDOM

ADA Soldiers Encounter Triumph and Tragedy On the Road to Baghdad

At the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, no one would have imagined that a maintenance support company from Fort Bliss, Texas, would turn out to be the war's most publicized unit; nor would anyone have predicted that one of its supply clerks, Pfc. Jessica Lynch, would emerge as the war's most celebrated soldier. By contrast, the Patriot brigades, battalions and batteries that the 507th Maintenance Support Company supported were closely watched from the very beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The world expected a rematch of the 1991 Gulf War duel between Patriot missiles and Iraqi Scuds. "Would the new Patriot Advanced Capabilities 3 (PAC-3) missiles with their hit-to-kill technology prove more effective than the PAC-2 missiles employed during the first Gulf War against corkscrewing Scuds over Saudi Arabia and Israel?" Many people thought that the future of homeland missile defense as well as theater missile defense rested on the answer to that question.

As it happened, the sharply anticipated rematch between U.S. Patriots and Iraqi Scuds never occurred, although U.S.

and Kuwaiti Patriot batteries dramatically proved their effectiveness against shorter-range but more accurate Iraqi missiles. U.S. Central Command credited U.S. and Kuwaiti Patriot units with downing every Iraqi missile fired into Kuwait or against Coalition field forces, except those that fell outside the Patriot's protective engagement envelope or crashed harmlessly into the ocean or empty desert. Patriot accounted for nine intercepts, two of which were scored with "hit to kill" PAC-3 missiles.

"Soldiers, marines, airmen, and civilians quickly developed overwhelming confidence in the Patriot Weapon system," said Col. Charles A. Anderson, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense command chief of staff. "The CFLCC [Coalition Forces Land Component Command] headquarters was under attack twice by TBMs [tactical ballistic missiles], and a Patriot battery less than a kilometer away launched missiles and destroyed the incoming TBM overhead. In fact, on one occasion, pieces of shrapnel from the TBM could be heard falling on top of the 32nd AAMDC headquarters roof. Patriot never missed, and not a single TBM had the opportu-



Soldiers of the 159th Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), gave 5-52 ADA soldiers a "standing ovation" for downing the missile before it hit the Screaming Eagles' helicopters.

nity to hit its intended target. We are proud that no lives were lost and no equipment was destroyed by a TBM."

Sirens wailing in Kuwait City, gas masks and personnel scrambling for bunkers reminded reporters of Dhahran and Tel Aviv during the 1991 Gulf War. Press reports attributed the first combat firing of a PAC-3 missile and Operation Iraqi Freedom's first missile intercept to Spc. Nicholas Bunch, Sgt. Michael Harris and 1st Lt. Marsha Hackett of Delta Battery, 5th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery, 11th ADA Brigade. According to a *Los Angeles Times* story, the Patriot missile scored a direct hit on an Iraqi missile bearing down on Camp Thunder, a 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) staging area near the Iraqi border.

"It just came out of nowhere," Bunch told *Albuquerque Journal* reporter Miguel Navrot "At first, we didn't think it was real. We were all just sitting there, watching the screen. You don't really expect it in real life."

"Sitting a few berms over from the Patriot," Navrot reported, were lines of CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters belonging to the 101st Airborne, as well as their tented quarters. They were using a strip of closed-off highway to land and maintain the birds."

"The missile was coming for the helicopter stockpile," said Bunch."

According to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, soldiers of the 159th Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), gave the 5-52 ADA soldiers a "standing ovation" for downing the missile before it hit the Screaming Eagles' helicopters.

Iraqi missile launches and Patriot intercepts continued as Coalition forces surged into Iraq during the opening days of Iraqi Freedom. Each intercept drew accolades from reporters "embedded" with the protected forces.

"Saddam's missile was aimed squarely at the Camp Doha [Kuwait] command post for the Coalition land assault," re-

ported a Fox News journalist. "Had it hit, American and British commanders of the land war may well have perished. This crucial Coalition headquarters could have been wiped out. We understood perfectly that Patriot had thwarted what might have been a crippling blow."

Fox News analyst Oliver North, traveling with a group of marines, praised Patriot units for guarding an airbase that sat in the sights of Iraqi Scuds. "It has been struck four times," says North. "Not one of those missiles, whether they were Scuds or Frogs or the Al Samoud missile, got through thanks to the Patriot missiles that surround it. There's a lot of marines, soldiers, sailors, airmen and guardsmen who are very grateful for those Patriot PAC-2 and PAC-3 missiles."

"Those of us who spent last week in the Kuwaiti desert are here to tell you ballistic missile defense works, providing civilians and troops alike with a marvelous shield against nasty dangers," reported the *American Enterprise*. "American antiballistic-missile technology was demonstrated to be the defensive bulwark of our future."

This time, however, the Iraqi missiles were aimed not just at population centers, assembly areas or large airfields, as during the 1991 Gulf War, but also at U.S. advancing armor and mechanized infantry columns and mobile tactical operations centers.

Soldiers of Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, 108th Brigade, were elated to learn they had been picked to defend key bridges over the Euphrates, an assignment that pushed them forward just behind the advancing 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized). "We feel that we are the best unit out here," Sgt. Christopher Cook of Alpha Battery told ABC News reporter Stephanie Gosk "We're getting the mission we deserve, and that's the tip of the spear."

But the battery's heavy Patriot missile launchers sank into the sand soon after the 2-43 ADA convoy, headed for a



Above, the D/5-52 ADA Patriot missile launcher credited with firing the first PAC-3 missile ever launched in combat.

location west of Nasiriya, crossed into Iraq. "Patriots were not made for this, not made for this at all," battery commander Capt. Douglas Lynch told the ABC News reporter.

"Soldiers in the unit let out air in the tires and struggled to chain the stranded launchers to other, more desert-worthy vehicles," Gosk wrote. "But the victory of getting the trailers moving again was replaced by new frustration, as the launchers sank again after rolling just a few feet."

After the weary Patriot battery finally rolled into position after a day and a half of non-stop travel, she noted, "In less than an hour, the Patriot missiles were set up, and it was the moment of truth for the computers and the radar. Everything worked and everyone was relieved. Maybe Patriot systems were made for this, after all."

Soldiers who took part in the dash for Baghdad no doubt wished the lighter, more mobile Medium Extended Air Defense System—scheduled to replace or complement Patriot sometime in the future—had been fielded before Operation Iraqi Freedom, but the decision to push Patriot batteries forward, in accordance with established doctrine, paid off.

"Just to the right of the 110-vehicle convoy, a Patriot anti-missile battery answered, with the sparkling contrails of two missiles clearly visible as they soared toward an impact point nearly six miles away," reported a *National Journal* correspondent touring Iraq with the marines. "The Patriot battery reported a successful intercept and confirmed that the [Iraqi missile] would have hit the ground less than a third of a mile in front of the convoy."

A Central Command press release dated April 1 announced the first Operation Iraqi Freedom Patriot intercept: "For the first time during Operation Iraqi Freedom, a Patriot firing battery destroyed an Iraqi ballistic missile launched against U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq today. The intercept, with a PAC-3 missile, took place at approximately 9:00 a.m. (1:00 a.m. EST) on Tuesday. The eight intercepts prior to this have taken place against missiles directed towards Kuwait. It is not known at this time what type of munitions the Iraqi ballistic missile was carrying. United States and Kuwaiti Patriot units continue to provide defense for Coalition Forces."

"The Iraqis have sought to disrupt the logistical push," wrote Michael R. Gordon of the *New York Times*. "On Tuesday, the Iraqis fired an al-Samoud surface-to-surface missile at the Americans. An anti-missile battery fired a PAC-3 interceptor at the Iraqi missile and knocked it down over Bushmaster, an assembly area in Iraq for Army forces. Debris from the intercept rained down on a commander from the 82nd Airborne Division."

Recognizing the seriousness of the missile threat, the division pushed 5-52 ADA forward to the newly captured and newly rechristened Baghdad International Airport. As a result, Patriot fire units were on hand at the gates of Baghdad as Army and Marine units advanced into the Iraqi capital.

"There's a lull now, but there was intense fighting for the past few hours," reported Lisa Rose Weaver, a KFOX-El Paso news reporter embedded with 5-52 ADA. "Here at the airport with 5-52nd ADA, we were hearing Iraqi incoming rounds. The ground vibrated but we were not under direct



At left, Pvt. Maria Peralta, E/2-43 ADA, drives a fuel tanker as she conducts refueling operations. At right, 2-43 ADA soldiers perform maintenance checks on a Patriot launcher. (Photos by Capt. Enrique Vasquez)



B/5-52 ADA's information coordination central and Patriot missile launchers at Baghdad International Airport.

attack. There were bright flashes on the horizon, officials here estimating it was about eight kilometers away," she continued. "Also, U.S. mortars as well as heavy artillery could be heard. Earlier in the evening, missiles from multiple launch rocket systems could be heard. So there has been a wide variety of different type of armaments, and extremely heavy pounding and intense barrages at certain points."

Helping Patriot soldiers celebrate the intercepts was Pvt. Carlos Depina of Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, 108th ADA Brigade. At 17, Depina was the youngest Patriot launcher missile crew member deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Before moving into Central Iraq, Depina's battery had engaged and destroyed the second Iraqi missile fired into Kuwait. However, the exultation over the Patriot's performance was dampened by two friendly fire accidents that claimed the lives of one American and two British pilots.

In Kuwait, a Patriot missile intercepted and destroyed a British Tornado, killing its two pilots as they returned from a mission over Iraq. The friendly fire incident became an international incident. The Patriot brigade commander visited the Royal Air Force detachment to pass on his condolences to the families of the dead pilot and navigator. In a second friendly fire event, a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Hornet may have been shot down by a Patriot missile battery deep inside Iraq.

"By the fifth day in the desert protecting the Karbala Gap, Echo Battery's only action of note had been to shoot down what was thought to be a short-range Scud missile—followed by the morale-sapping news that in all probability, Echo had accidentally shot down a U.S. Navy jet instead," reported 5-52 ADA's embedded reporter, Lisa Rose Weaver.

"Certainly it is tragic to lose an airplane in any light, and it is particularly tragic when you have any kind of fratricide or blue on blue," said Lt. Gen. Michael Moseley, commander of the Coalition Forces Air Component Command, at an April 5 briefing. "I would ask you to think about the conditions that we're operating in out there. I'm not willing to assess blame on a Patriot commander who is in the middle of a moving fight with missiles being fired, and missiles have

been fired, with real chemical and biological threats. And that afternoon, we were dealing with those particular problems. We were in the middle of a raging fight on the surface, [conducting] strikes into Baghdad and multiple strikes—at least a thousand sortie strikes—on the Republican Guard ahead of these Army units."

Iraqi Freedom friendly fire deaths seemed to stand out more than in previous wars because the number of U.S. and Coalition soldiers killed by enemy action, despite fierce fighting, was relatively low. Anti-war elements of the British press turned the Tornado shoot-down into a minor international incident while anti-missile defense critics in the United States seized on the blue-on-blue incidents to argue that Patriot, and therefore national missile defense, were unreliable.

"There have been some blue-on-blue incidents," said Lt. Gen. McKiernan, commander, Third U.S. Army and U.S. Army Forces Central Command and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command, who rose to Patriot's defense during an April 23 Pentagon briefing. "We take every one of those extremely seriously. Every one is investigated individually. And it's premature for me to comment on any of them, because, to my knowledge, none of those investigations have been completed. There were a couple that involved Patriot, but I would tell you on balance that every surface-to-surface missile that was fired that Patriot engaged was destroyed. Some of them we didn't engage because they landed out in places in the desert where they weren't a threat or they landed out in the North Arabian Gulf. But I will tell you the Patriot's been a big winner over here in our theater missile defense plan."

Many ADA soldiers served with family members in the same theater of operations. For Sgt. Gary Hemingway, a U.S. Patriot soldier, this turned into a family tragedy. His older brother, Terry, a Bradley Fighting Vehicle commander, was killed when a car exploded beside his vehicle at a Baghdad checkpoint. Gary got the bad news as his Patriot unit waited in Kuwait to move into Iraq in support of the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), the Fort Hood, Texas, "digital" division whose entry into the war had been delayed by Turkey's refusal to host U.S. forces. Gary escorted his brother home

to America on a military transport. "This is what we do," Gary told *New Jersey Times* reporter Robert Stern. "We make sure that all Americans can enjoy freedom, and if this spreads out throughout the world, then we've done a perfect job," said Gary.

As Coalition forces closed the noose on Baghdad, a Stinger section parachuted into Northern Iraq with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Once on the ground, the paratroopers joined forces with Special Forces and Kurdish militia to perform a mission originally envisioned for the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), which had been denied permission to enter Iraq through Turkey.

Meanwhile, other divisional air defense units moved forward out of Kuwait into Iraq with their supported units. Deprived of a rotary or fixed-wing air threat and denied permission to fire on what they identified as Iraqi drones or lighter-than-air vehicles, they found other ways to make themselves useful.

On March 24, soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery, received orders to move a Bradley Linebacker platoon to the town of Al Kifl and guard a bridge. Army commanders believed Iraqi fighters were crossing the bridge en route to ambushing U.S. forces along the main supply route. As Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Gruidl's Linebacker platoon moved through the center of town, it was hit by a hail of rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire. It was the beginning of a nasty four-and-a-half-day fight in which the Linebacker platoon used its machine guns to fight off constant attacks by "homicidal not suicidal" civilian vehicles. Finally, a relief force of U.S. Bradley Fighting Vehicles and battle tanks arrived. "I think we did it above and beyond," Spc. Sherman Barto told a *Savannah Morning News* reporter. "We were finally given a mission, which is what we always wanted."

Soon after the climatic toppling of Saddam's statue in downtown Baghdad, Avenger crewman James Vogel found himself upside down in the turret of his submerged Avenger in a Baghdad canal. According to embedded *U.S. News* reporter Julian E. Barnes, Vogel and his team chief, Sgt. Brian Jimenez, were providing armed escort for a psychological operations loudspeaker truck when, blinded by smoke, they



A U.S. Army Avenger provides air defense protection for Coalition maneuver forces in Southern Iraq.

drove the Avenger into the canal.

"Within seconds," wrote Barnes, "the Avenger flipped upside down into the canal, landing on its turret." "It was like slow motion; I was in the turret and then everything went black and water started rushing in," Vogel said. Vogel, 26, looked around. He was still sitting in his gunner's seat, but now he was upside down, his head under water. For two minutes he twisted around in his seat thinking about his wife, thinking he was going to die, praying that he would not. Finally he managed to get to the small air pocket in the turret.

"In the front of the truck, Jimenez tried to open his door," Barnes continued. "But it was jammed against the bottom of the canal. Jimenez began to panic. He thought of Vogel, trapped in the top of the turret. Jimenez stripped off his body armor, mask, and Kevlar helmet, then squeezed out the window. "Vogel, are you taking on water!" Jimenez shouted. Yes, came the muffled response. Jimenez looked around and saw the ax strapped to the bottom of the Avenger. Jimenez shouted for Vogel to move his head away from the side of the turret and took a swing at his truck with the ax.

"To help cut top heaviness, the turret is made of fiberglass and wood, not metal," Barnes recounted. "Jimenez hacked a hole in its side, then grabbed Vogel's head and pulled it out of the flooded turret. A few more minutes and a few more ax swings and Vogel was completely out of the truck and on the side of the road. 'That is something you can't teach a soldier to do,' Lt. John Brock, the platoon leader, said later. 'It was extremely quick thinking by Sergeant Jimenez. If most people were in his shoes, Vogel would be dead.'"

Other ADA units spent Operation Iraqi Freedom outside the theater of operation, but made the invasion possible by providing a shield against Iraqi missiles. In Israel and Jordan, U.S. Patriot soldiers manned fire units to serve as a deterrent against the possibility that Iraq, in a repeat of its 1991 Gulf War strategy, might launch Scud missiles at Israel or neighboring countries. Patriot soldiers in both countries were breaking new ground. The historic and, at first, secret, deployment of Patriot into Jordan placed Patriot soldiers in the midst of a potential hostile population and underscored



A U.S. Marine Corps Avenger stands guard at a captured airport in Southern Iraq.



In Israel, Patriot missile live fires climaxed Exercise Juniper Cobra 2003, which tested the Patriot-Arrow missile interface on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

the seriousness with which neighboring countries view the Iraqi missile threat. In Israel, U.S. and Israeli Patriot soldiers, for the first time, integrated their system with an upper-tier missile defense system, the Israeli Arrow.

The decision to stand down Patriot fire units in Israel came after Coalition forces overran surface-to-surface missile launch areas in Iraq. "We came here to assist an already existing air defense system," said Maj. Gen. Stanley Green, commander of the U.S. Joint Task Force in Israel, at a ceremony marking the end of the U.S. mission. "Our mission here was to deter, and if necessary defend. Deterrence worked."

The *Associated Press* reported that some U.S. Patriot soldiers regretted that they hadn't seen any military action in the war while others said they were simply looking forward to getting home. "I really miss my Mom," said Pfc. Anthony Johnson, from Texarkana, Ark. "But that's the Army."

Despite the friendly fire incidents, which are under investigation, Patriot soldiers convincingly demonstrated the effectiveness of the enhanced PAC-2 and PAC-3, as well as the validity of theater air and missile defense doctrine. Divisional air defense units, once again, proved their versatility in combat on the road to Baghdad and in peacekeeping operations that followed the crushing of the Iraqi regime. Their performance against a more-varied-than-anticipated air and

missile threat was not ignored, and will have a significant impact on future doctrine, but it was almost totally eclipsed in the public consciousness by the ordeal and ultimate redemption of the 507th Maintenance Support Company.

March 23, with 33 killed in action—most of them at Nasiriya—was the bloodiest and the darkest day of the war. The story of how the 507th convoy was ambushed at Nasiriya, the daring Special Forces raid that rescued Private Lynch, and the eventual rescue of five 507th prisoners of war has been splashed across the front pages of magazines and newspapers around the world. The maintenance company's dead and wounded were not forgotten. They were eulogized at an emotionally charged ceremony at Fort Bliss, Texas, and grieved for at smaller, sadder rituals in hometown cemeteries. Meanwhile, video clips of 507th POWs in captivity and during the moment of their release following the fall of Baghdad replayed endlessly on network and cable news. On April 19, thousands turned out at Fort Bliss's Biggs Army Airfield to welcome home five returning 507th POWs.

U.S. Central Command is still investigating what happened at Nasiriya, but few reporters thought to ask what became of 507th soldiers who escaped the lethal ambush and captivity. The 507th had no "embedded" reporter, and their story has been untold.

The 507th Maintenance Company is assigned to 5-52 ADA, 11th ADA Brigade, which is subordinate to the 32nd Air and Missile Defense Command, an organization created specifically to coordinate and exercise operational control over all air and missile defense units within a theater of operations. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, some Patriot batteries defended Kuwait, Jordan and Israel from missile attack, but other Patriot units, including Patriot battalions assigned to the 11th ADA Brigade, followed maneuver units like the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) into Iraq and the violent swirl of combat. Trailing just behind the Patriot missile units came the 507th Maintenance Support Company.

Soldiers headed into combat sometimes prefer to let their relatives assume they won't be in harm's way. That the 507th would operate in combat zones just behind the front line



Brig. Gen. Howard Bromberg, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense commander, counsels 507th Maintenance Support Company soldiers who survived the ambush at Nasiriya.



Pfc. Jessica Lynch of the 507th Maintenance Support Company became the war's most publicized soldier following her rescue. Other released 507th POWs, like Spec. 4 Shoshana Johnson, right, returned home to jubilant welcomes.

came as a revelation to many 507th parents, who had assumed their sons and daughters would sit out the war in the relative safety of huge rear area installations. This illusion seems to have been shared by many of the parents of Patriot soldiers, who were unaware that doctrine pushes Patriot units forward as mechanized infantry and armored units advance.

"My mother would freak out if she knew I was here," one 5-52 ADA soldier told Lisa Rose Weaver. The soldier, wrote Weaver, "represents a minority of soldiers who have not even told their loved ones that they're in Iraq; instead reassuring them that they remain on one of several U.S. military bases in Kuwait."

Another 5-52 ADAPatriot soldier told Weaver that "They don't need to know that we've been mortared, they don't need to know we've been fired upon by RPG's [rocket propelled grenades.] They just don't need to know."

As a combat service support company, the 507th closely followed the Patriot batteries it supported across the battlefield to perform on-the-spot repairs. Their presence on the battlefield helped keep the firing batteries up and operating and was essential to mission success.

Reporters frequently described 507th Maintenance Support Company soldiers as "mechanics" who were not "real combat soldiers." While a maintenance company is not equivalent to a rifle company in combat effectiveness, all soldiers receive training in infantry tactics and weapons. Commanders don't purposely send support units into firefights, where they are likely to be outgunned, but mechanics, cooks and supply clerks have picked up rifles and engaged the enemy in previous wars.

The fight at Nasiriya was the bloodiest of the war, and it would have been a tough fight even for a rifle company. Outgunned and caught in an impossible situation, the soldiers of the 507th, according to published accounts, gave a good account of themselves. And they quickly recovered from the shock of battle and carried on with the mission.

Current doctrine, which calls for rapid movement across a "fluid" battlefield, quickly toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, but it exposed support units like the 507th to greater hazards. In fact, the recognition that support units are likely to be exposed to combat on 21st-century battlefields is one of the driving forces behind the Army's decision to open more direct combat positions, including those in Avenger air defense units, to women.

The ambush at Nasiriya, which seemed to indicate the cost of victory might be high, and the howling sandstorms that followed, were the darkest days of the war. 507th soldiers wrote the names of their dead, wounded, missing and captured on their helmets and on the hoods of their Humvees.

"Specialist Brooke Wicke, monitoring the radio, suddenly shouted, 'She's out! They reported it! Specialist Lynch is out!'" wrote Weaver, the KFOX-El Paso reporter embedded with 5-52 ADA. "A moment of joy erupted as troops learned that Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, 19, who had been taken prisoner by the Iraqis on March 23, had been rescued. Many of the soldiers in the Patriot unit had known her, as she belonged to their maintenance company - the 507th from Fort Bliss. 'A tiny little thing, very young'" was how one colleague described her."

Along with millions of Americans, soldiers of 5-52 ADA



Left, 507th Maintenance Support Company soldiers carry on the mission. Right, Briana Trusdell and Valerie Castillo await the arrival of flights bringing their husbands and about 300 other ADA soldiers home to Fort Bliss from Southwest Asia.

and the 507th cheered the “Saving of Private Lynch,” the war’s first “good news” story. And they later were elated to learn that the remaining POWs had been freed.

Proponents of placing women in combat say the conduct of the 507th’s females under fire prove that women can handle the stress of combat. Spc. 4 Lori Piestewa of the 507th was the only female U.S. soldier to die in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Pfc. Lynch and Spc. 4 Shoshana Johnson of the 507th were the war’s only female POWs. Opponents of placing women in combat point out that Piestewa was a single mother, as is Johnson, who suffered two gunshot wounds.

The 507th soldiers who, so far, have escaped Operation Iraqi Freedom unscathed will march in victory parades with other U.S. and Coalition units, but they will never receive nor begrudge the publicity and adoration showered on the rescued POWs. They’ll never forget the rattle of AK-47s, the “hiss-bang” of rocket-propelled grenades, or the dead and wounded they left behind on the road to Baghdad. They will return to Fort Bliss as seasoned combat veterans. Some will pursue college degrees and civilian careers. Others will discover that combat has reinforced rather than weakened their attraction to the military, their love of country, and their dedication to duty. These soldiers will prepare to lead other generations of soldiers on future battlefields.

A cheering crowd of thousands greeted the freed POWs upon their April 17 return to Fort Bliss, but in Iraq, the lives of ADA soldiers were still at risk as combat operations evolved into peacekeeping operations.

Retired Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, the man handpicked by the Bush administration to begin Iraq’s reconstruction as a true democracy, arrived in Baghdad on April 21. As his plane descended toward Baghdad International, perhaps Garner looked out the window and saw the Patriot batteries still defending the airport. “What better day in your life can you have than to be able to help somebody else, to help other people, and that is what we intend to do,” Garner told reporters as he deplaned.

The military campaign that toppled Saddam Hussein in three short weeks was a smashing success, but soldiers sometimes worry that politicians and diplomats will throw away

the hard-earned victories of the battlefield. ADA soldiers old enough to remember Garner when he commanded ADA units, served as Fort Bliss’s deputy commanding general, or fought the branch’s funding battles in the Pentagon, felt reassured as they watched him stride through the Iraqi capital. They felt that America was well on its way toward keeping its covenant with its war dead, and that their deaths will not have been in vain.



Gen. Tommy Franks, Commander, U.S. Army Central Command, congratulates ADA soldiers at Baghdad International Airport following the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s regime.